

America's LITTLE BAND Intrepid Explorers

SENT OUT FROM
WASHINGTON BY THE
GOVERNMENT.

PLUNGING through the tropical wilds of Africa, penetrating the most hostile territory of the warlike Thibetans, prying into the innermost regions of the Celestial Kingdom, America is sending out from Washington an intrepid little band of explorers, the Christopher Columbuses of the twentieth century, who are enriching the world today in a way that will reflect its profit upon every citizen of the United States.

When the explorers of the fifteenth century set out upon their expeditions it was with the lust for gold and for personal aggrandizement. But the fearless explorers and adventurers of today are spurred on solely by the determination to enrich their native lands by bringing or sending back to the Department of Agriculture the seeds, the plants, and the woods which they discover in far away lands, and which they know will prove of national profit.

The adventures which many of these explorers have had in the dark and semi-civilized continents rival the stories told by Stanley of his famous trip through the jungles of the Congo in his search for Livingston.

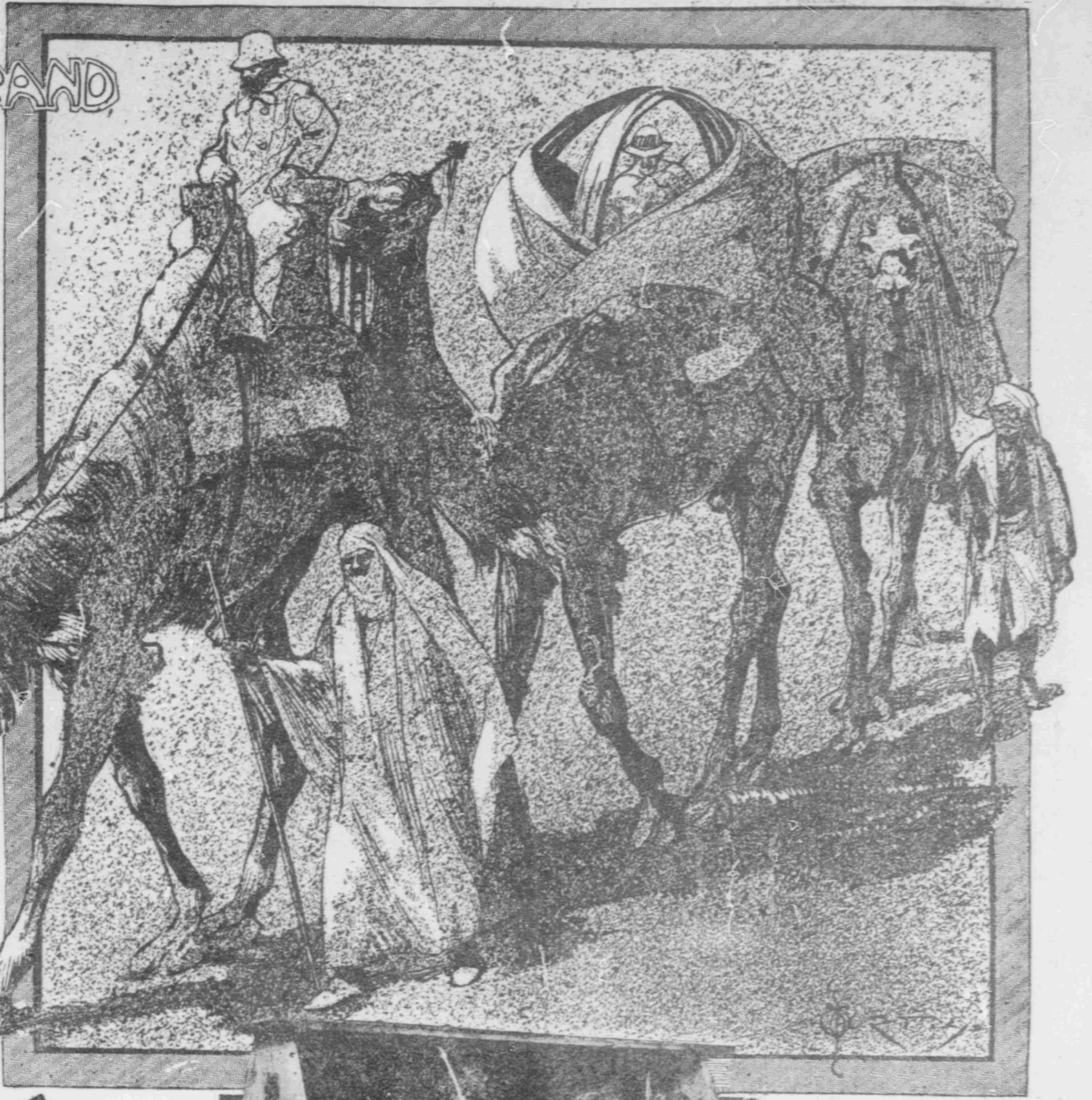
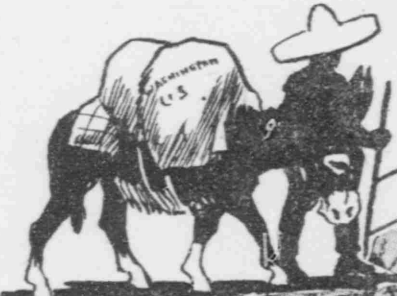
THE greatest of all explorers is the decidedly modern representative of the Government's Department of Agriculture who penetrates to the remotest corners of the earth in search of things that grow from the soil that may be transplanted to his own country and there take root and flourish, creating a new wealth and descending as a heritage upon the generations that are to

foothold on the farms and are entering the marts of commerce.

Lead Lives of Adventure.

Accidental introductions of the past impressed upon the authorities the possibilities of such work. The navel orange was such an introduction and brings millions into the coffers of the growers every year. The Elberta peach originated from seeds brought by missionaries from China, and it has crowded the inferior grades off the market, and is the greatest seller of them all. Durum wheat has increased the output of the semi-arid West by \$2,000,000 a year. Japanese rice introduced made that cereal yield three additional millions annually. In all more than 20,000 introductions have been made, and while their real worth cannot be estimated thus early in the course of the experiment, they will prove a strong factor in the future of the country's wealth.

The little body of men who are making these things possible, the De Sotas and Balboas of modern times, lead lives of adventure and of romance that are readily comparable with those of their predecessors in the field of exploration. They find their



coming reception and pleased them by his courtesy. Under the cover of the time so gained he escaped to safety. Meyer is rapidly becoming a prominent figure in this new line of activity. He has been in China and contiguous territory for nearly three years, and during that time has rendered remarkable service. He is well known in the busy streets of Shanghai to both native and foreigner; in Peking he is welcomed to the legations of many nations and shown through ancient gardens and temple grounds by such people as Dr. Kim, one of the most remarkable women of the empire; he has entered the warlike walls of Port Arthur and of Mukden in pursuit of passports into a region still in dangerous unrest; he has mingled with the whiskered Russians who dwell in the forbidding climate of a far northern Khabarovsk; he has penetrated to the great interior where a white man had never before been seen, and where an elastic band is as mystic a thing to the natives as were the trinkets that early traders brought to the American Indian.

Man With a Mission.

Many thousands of miles have been covered in two and a half years, for Meyer is a man with a mission and in its accomplishment he cannot be daunted. His commission is to go into the great unknown of China and Siberia and discover what there is in the way of soil products that may be

brought into this country. He has traveled much on foot, for he readily walks thirty miles a day and likes it. He has resorted to caravan and camels and to donkey carts; has required military escorts and has used whatever resource the time and occasion offered and has all the time kept the stream of new discoveries coming in from the field of his activities. In the transmission of the plants which he has found, Meyer has accomplished more than has any other explorer of the department operating in a field so far removed from the country he represents. Never before have living plants been sent from China and reached the United States in such good condition for planting. Meyer has succeeded so well in packing his cuttings, swathing them in many bandages in such a way as to preserve the life germs, that 75 per cent of them have grown in their new surroundings. The difficulties in accomplishing this can hardly be exaggerated when the slowness of transportation from China and the lack of facilities in the interior regions for readily dispatching express are considered. Heretofore only seeds have been sent to America, and the introduction of living plants is a new accomplishment.

China Most Fertile Field.

There are more possibilities in the work being carried on by Mr. Meyer than any other explorer in the field.

METHOD OF PACKING PLANTS FOR SHIPMENT.

because the section of country he covers is identical in climate with that of the United States, and plants growing in the one country will naturally flourish under the climatic conditions of the other. Aside from this the Chinese have been an active horticultural people for many centuries, and are regarded as having secrets that will be of great value when applied in this country. The fact that the two countries are on opposite sides of the earth from each other explains why so many valuable crops in the one remain unknown in the other.

One of Mr. Meyer's new finds is a huge persimmon of an entirely new type from the representatives of that fruit on the Western Hemisphere. It is four inches in diameter and is seedless. The tree is hardy and thrives further north in China than any of the cultivated species now grown in America. These persimmon trees sent by Mr. Meyer are now thriving in Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Florida. It is believed that the great plains section, which is too cold for Japanese persimmons, will be found suitable for this variety and that it will yield hundreds of thousands of dollars annually when it becomes established.

The Pekin pear is another variety of fruit that promises to be of value to plant breeders in the United States because of peculiar qualities not found in western varieties. Mr. Meyer tramped the country around the Chinese capital for six months in search of the right variety of this pear and finally found it in Mongolia and successfully introduced the cuttings.

While in north China Mr. Meyer made two rather remarkable discoveries, both of which are being investigated. The first was a paper shell walnut, the covering of the kernel being so thin that the meat often showed through. It is a remarkable fruit and the scientists figure that by crossing it with the ordinary American variety, an ideal nut may be obtained. This, however, is one of the experiments that it will take many years to work out because of the time required to grow the trees, and is one of the many introductions which bear more strongly on the future than on the present.

The second discovery in the north of China was a lawn grass that promises immediate popularity and death to the lawn mower trust. It grows in a smooth sod that covers the earth and never needs the mower to keep it from getting ragged because it lies close to the ground. It is a resistant of cold and remains green when other grasses are blighted by drought. The

saflener at the German embassy at Peking recommended it strongly and it was later found at the North Tomb in Nukden, where it had evidently flourished for hundreds of years under the dense shade of tall trees. It has been successfully transplanted to America and may soon be in evidence in many Western parks and lawns.

A strong side light is thrown on rural accommodations in China in one of Mr. Meyer's letters, written at this time, that surpasses the laments of the traveling salesman in America. He says:

"The Chinese have only brick beds, and when a room is occupied by twenty or thirty men they have a fire underneath those beds, but when a white man wants a room to himself, then, of course one gets a room which is not much used and in which there is no fire. To heat these bricks takes more than a day and the smoke one has to endure during that time made me generally prefer to sleep on the cold bricks. When I eat my food in such a place I have to wear an overcoat and sheepskin to keep warm, for the paper windows are in a pitiful condition of repair and the continual flapping of the torn paper is often worse than would be its absence."

The summer of 1906 Mr. Meyer spent in the northern portion of Korea, where he hastened to see the great forests of that section upon hearing that they were being cut down and consumed by the Japanese. The trees of this section should flourish in the northern portion of the United States and a number of specimens have been introduced. A phenomenon that greatly impressed the explorer in these Northern forests was the entire absence of bird life and the great stillness of the forest primeval.

Attacked by Bandits.

Radiating from Vladivostok a great number of long and difficult trips were made overlaid by all manner of conveyances and many adventures encountered ranging from desertion by guides in the wilds of an unknown country to hand-to-hand battles with bandits who sought to kill the explorer.

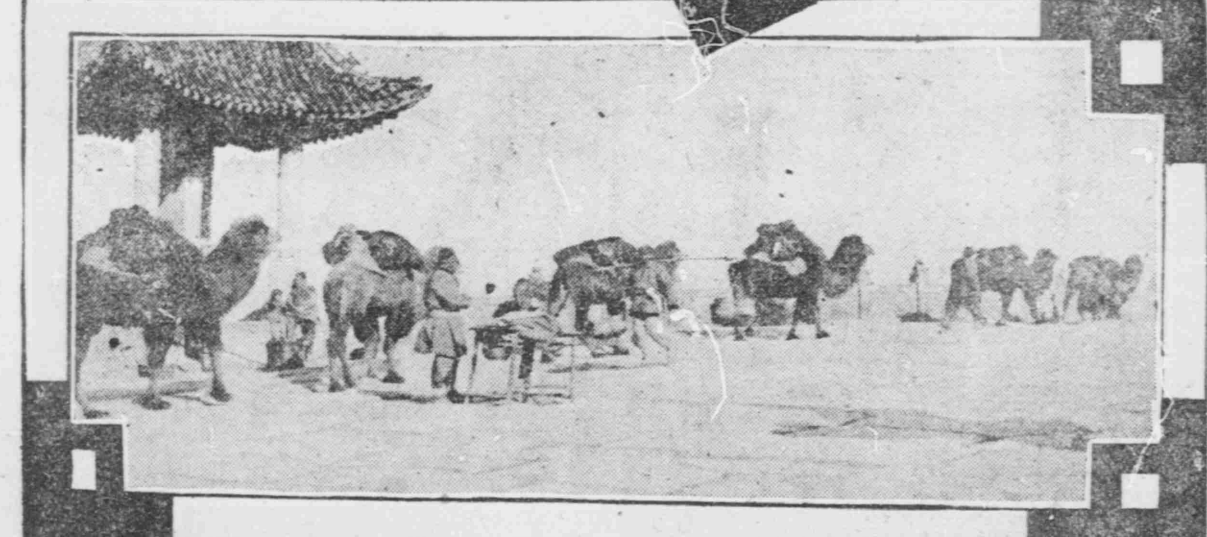
This latter incident occurred in Haborovsk, Siberia, which is in the section that is inhabited by bandits of the most murderous type. In a dark street of a small town late one night Mr. Meyer was set upon by three ruffians who succeeded in getting a cloth over his face and dragging him down, in the meantime beating him lustily. He succeeded in freeing his hands, and, grasping his dagger, plunged it into the stomach of one of his antagonists and caused the others to take to their heels. The next morning an earlier victim of the gang was found dead near the point where Meyer had been attacked.

So lost in the wilds did the explorer find himself upon many occasions that there was known to be imminent danger from the beasts of the wood. Near Cownaskaya, Siberia, he camped in a deserted wood-chopper's hut and heard a tiger's roar in the night. The next day he learned that a great beast had just been killed and that two weeks previous one had carried off the body of a lone wood-chopper and his body had been devoured in its den.

The Surface Only Scratched.

Always after these wanderings this practical explorer with the Chinese assignment returns to the foreign consulates or legations with stores of seeds and plants for shipment and with many tales of the interior, of adventure and of narrow escapes. He is always a guest welcomed by Americans or Europeans, and his unexpected arrival in an out-of-the-way

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BY CARAVAN IN CHINA.

come. His is not the object of the explorer of old who went forth to find new lands that might be brought under the sovereignty of his king or that of the modern scientist who would publish theories of the evolution of the select few who would care to know the geologic epoch to which some distant formation belongs. His mission is to make more productive the farms that constitute the backbone of the nation, to bring more palatable fruits to the table of the epicure and better to feed the multitude.

The office of plant introduction of the Department of Agriculture has been in existence only ten years, and its possibilities of accomplishment are just now being realized. Under its chief, David Fairchild, a man of unlimited enthusiasm, the official explorer has come into being and already the fruits of the tropics, the hardy grains of Siberia, the myrrhs, and the lotus flowers of the ancient East, the plants of beauty or value of the whole world, are to be found in the Government gardens and experiment stations, and many of them have already gained a

way into ancient civilizations where the discovery of a growing shrub in a temple garden may be as valuable as the riches of the Incas, or in desert solitudes where the spring may be found that will give renewed life to a decayed industry. They face dangers that are strange and new and surmount difficulties that vie with those conceived by the creator of fiction. A leaf from the life of one of them may serve as an example of their experiences.

The mob cry was to be heard in the streets of Hankow. That roar of the onrushing hundreds which, in the land of one's nativity where his ear is trained to interpret the sounds it hears, strikes terror to the hearts of the timid, was accentuated by the high treble of the Chinese shriek. The problem of judging the temper of the mob which is puzzling at the best, was made more difficult because of the curtain of a lack of understanding that hangs between the Mongolian and the westerner and makes each see into the other's mind darkly.

The time was February, 1906, and